lt Gordon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

(*ki thiar*). The paddy-fields are not manured. The Khasis 243
when cultivating high lands, select a clayey soil if they can. In the early part of the winter the soils are turned over with the hoe, and they are exposed to the action of the atmosphere for a period of about two months. When the soils are dry, they are placed in piles, which are generally in rows in the fields, and by means of ignited bundles of dry grass within the piles a slow fire is kept up, the piles of soils being gradually reduced to ashes. This is the "paring and burning process" used in England. The ashes so obtained are then carefully raked over the field. Sometimes other manure is also applied, but not when paddy is cultivated. The soil is now fit to receive the seed, either high-land paddy, millet, Job's tears, or other crops, as the case may be. The homestead lands are plentifully manured, and consequently, with attention, produce good crops. They are cultivated with the hoe.

The cultivation of oranges in the southern portion of the 244
district ranks equally in importance with that of the potato in 245
the northern. The orange, which is known in Calcutta as the Chhatak or Sylhet orange, comes from the warm southern slopes of the hills in this district, where it is cultivated on an extensive scale. Although oranges do best when there is considerable heat, they have been known to do well as high as 5,000 ft.; but the usual limit of elevation for the growth of oranges in this district is probably about 1,000 to 1,500 ft. The orange of the Khasi Hills has always been famous for its excellence, and Sir George Birdwood, in his introduction to the "First Letter Book of the East India Company," page 36, refers to the orange and lemon of Garhwal, Sikkim, and Khasia as having been carried by Arab traders into Syria, "whence the Crusaders helped to gradually propagate them throughout Southern Europe." Therefore, whereas the potato was im- 03
ported, the orange would appear to be indigenous in these hills.

Nurseries.—The seeds are collected and dried by being 247
exposed to the sun. In the spring nurseries are prepared, the ground being thoroughly hoed and the soil pulverized as far as possible. The nursery is walled with stones. The seeds are then sown, a thin top layer of earth being applied. The

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

247 nurseries are regularly watered, and are covered up with layers of leaves to ensure, as far as possible, the retention of the necessary moisture. When the plants are 3 or 4 in. high, they are transplanted to another and larger nursery, the soil of which has been previously well prepared for the reception of the young plants.

245 An orangery is prepared in the following manner:—

The shrubs, weeds and small trees are cut down, leaving only the big trees for the purpose of shade. The plants from the nurseries are planted from 6 ft. to 9 ft. apart. When they have become young trees, many of the branches of the sheltering trees mentioned above are lopped off, so as to admit the necessary amount of sunlight to the young orange trees. As the orange trees increase in size, the sheltering trees are gradually felled. The orchard requires clearing of jungle once in spring and once in autumn. The Khasis do not manure their orange trees, nor do they dig about and expose the roots. The price of orange plants is from 75 to 100 plants per rupee for plants from 1 to 2 ft. in height, and from fifty to seventy-five plants per rupee for plants from 2 to 5 ft. in height. Orange trees bear fruit when from five to eight years old in ordinary soils. In very fertile soils they sometimes bear after four years. A full-grown tree yields annually as many as 1,000 oranges, but a larger number is not unknown. The larger portion of the produce is exported from the district to the plains, and to fruit markets at the foot of the hills such as Thoria, Mawdon, and Phali-Bazar, on the Shella river, whence it finds its way to the Calcutta and Eastern Bengal markets.

[235]

238

244 Potatoes are raised on all classes of land, except *lakli*, or wet paddy land. When the land has been properly levelled and hoed, drains are dug about the field. A cultivator (generally a female), with a basket of seed potatoes on her back and with a small hoe in her right hand, digs holes and with the left hand drops two seed-potatoes into each hole. The holes are about 6 in. in diameter, 6 in. deep, and from 6 to 9 in. apart from one another. Another woman, with a load of manure in a basket on her back, throws a little manure over the seed in the hole, and then covers both up with earth.